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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/867,068	05/29/2001	Robert H. Scheer	31083.05US5	5742
34018	7590	09/21/2005	EXAMINER	
GREENBERG TRAUIG, LLP			JARRETT, SCOTT L	
77 WEST WACKER DRIVE			ART UNIT	
SUITE 2500			PAPER NUMBER	
CHICAGO, IL 60601-1732			3623	

DATE MAILED: 09/21/2005

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/867,068

Applicant(s)

SCHEER, ROBERT H.

Examiner

Scott L. Jarrett

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– The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 27 June 2005.
- 2a) ☒ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☐ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-15 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-15 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413) |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152) |
| Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____ | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

DETAILED ACTION

1. This **Final** Office Action is responsive to Applicant's amendment filed June 27, 2005. Applicant's amendment amended Claims 1-15 and canceled Claims 16-22. Currently Claims 1-15 are pending.

Response to Amendment

2. The objection to the specification in the First Office Action, dated June 6, 2005, is withdrawn in response to the Applicant's amendment to the title.

3. The 35 U.S.C. 112 (2) rejection of Claim 12 in the First Office Action is withdrawn in response to the Applicant's amendments to Claim 12.

4. The Provisional Double Patenting rejection of Claims 1-22 over Claims 1-19 in the copending Application No. 09/867,301 are withdrawn in response to the terminal disclaimer filed on June 27, 2005 disclaiming the terminal portion of any patent granted on this application which would extend beyond the expiration date of 09/867,301. The terminal disclaimer has been reviewed and is accepted.

Response to Arguments

5. Applicant's arguments filed June 27, 2005 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive. Specifically Applicant argues:

- Roddy et al. and Yang et al. fail to teach or disclose "each and every word" of the claimed invention (Pages 7-8) specifically that neither Roddy et al. or Yang et al. teach a system in which a **server** (i.e. the system) extracts information from a work order, as now claimed, or that the advance demand notice is provided to a distributor (Pages 9-10);

- Roddy et al. fails to be prior art because the cited Figures 3-4 are not supported in the parent applications (Page 8); and

- Yang et al. fails to be prior art because "most" of the cited paragraphs and/or figures are not supported in the parent application (Page 9).

Regarding applicant's argument that the prior art of record fails to teach a system in which a **server** (i.e. the system) extracts information from a work order, as now claimed, examiner respectfully disagrees.

Roddy et al., as cited in the first office action, teach system and method for managing enterprise assets as part of a supply chain network wherein a customer system (agent server, application, module, software, "**expert system**", Paragraph 0086; Figures 1, 4, 9) in communication (Internet, global communication/information network; Paragraphs 0006, 0027; Figure 1) with the maintenance system which extracts (pulls, collects, real-time data collection, monitors, queries, etc., Paragraph 0007-0008;

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Figures 5, 6; Figure 7, Element 122) scheduled maintenance activity information to create an advanced (forecast, future, predicted, planned, projected, etc.) demand notice (signal, alert, message, etc.) order (work order, repair action, service recommendation, demand forecast, predicted repair/service/maintenance, purchase order; Paragraphs 0037; Figures 2, 3, 9) that identifies the resources (parts, technicians, items, etc.) needed for the repair/maintenance activity.

More specifically Roddy et al. teaches that an **"Expert systems and/or expert** personnel evaluate whether a fault condition is developing outside of the normal boundaries and a corrective action may be proposed and communicated via a global communication network.", (Paragraph 0086) wherein the evaluation step evaluates data **extracted** from the enterprise assets being monitored by the system.

Regarding applicant's argument that the prior art of record fails to teach a system in which an advance demand notice is provided to a distributor examiner respectfully disagrees.

Roddy et al. teach an enterprise asset management system and method wherein a distributor (an entity that warehouses/stores and distributes products, parts, supplies, goods, etc.; e.g. maintenance repair centers or repair facilities) system in communicates with one or more systems each of which respond to the advanced demand notice (message, signal) order (work/service order, work scope, service recommendation), created as a result of the extracted and expertly analyzed enterprise asset data, to initiate the staging (placement, movement) of items expected to be used as part of the

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repair procedure ("The recommended action may be supplied directly into the train control system. At this time, the data center or service personnel may evaluate the most logical repair location in terms of various criteria, such as train proximity, parts, repair equipment availability, manpower availability, etc. The service recommendation **automatically** triggers the creation of an electronic work order 172 within a service shop management system. A **notification** is then sent, such as via an e-mail message or by providing information on an Internet web page, to the service team detailing the parts and labor necessary for a timely and accurate repair.", Paragraph 0086; "As soon as the service team receives information about the necessary repair, team members gather or reserve parts, equipment and personnel needed to perform the corrective action.", Paragraph 0087, "...**inventory management**, will be improved to have the correct part available when it is needed.", Paragraph 0081; Paragraphs 0082-0088; Figures 3-4, 8, 9).

Yang et al. teach a service parts inventory management and planning method, system and marketplace (portal), in the analogous art of service planning/asset maintenance, for providing service parts (items, materials, resources) from a plurality of suppliers (sellers, vendors) into a supply chain network (electronic marketplace, portal; Abstract) for the purpose of facilitating the planning, management, distribution and fulfillment of service parts in a supply chain network comprising a plurality of suppliers, distributors and customers (multi-echelon inventory systems; Paragraphs 0007-0008; Figures 1-2).

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Further Yang et al. teach a service parts inventory management and planning method and system comprising:

- a supply chain network including a plurality of collaborating planner systems (ERP/enterprise systems; Figure 3, Element 48; Paragraphs 0003, 0007, 0030, 0050);

- staging (locating, placing, stocking) service parts in accordance with the fulfillment/inventory plan (i.e. in response to future/forecasted demand, orders, etc.; "A manager application receives the inventory plan and, according to the inventory plan, initiates one or more services in an attempt to resolve at least a portion of the service parts excesses or needs at one or more of the stocking locations through interaction with one or more other entities.", Paragraph 0007); and

- a service scheduling subsystem which coordinates parts requirements with service requests based on available service parts and ensures that parts are available at the repair site on or before the schedule service date (Paragraphs 0041-0043).

Regarding applicant's argument that the Roddy et al. fails to be prior art due to a lack of support for the cited teachings in the parent applications (Schick et al.:

Application No. 09/736,495; U.S. Patent Publication No. 2002/0065698; Fera et al.

Application No. 09/644420) examiner respectfully disagrees. Additional examiner notes that Schlabach, James Provisional Application No. 60/201,243 is also a parent application to the Roddy et al. reference and a copy of the disclosure has been included with this office action.

While examiner agrees that the exact figures cited, specifically Figures 3-4 in the first office action, do not appear in the parent applications, examiner disagrees that the parent applications do not provide support for the relevant teachings. Support for the cited figures and their relevant teachings (e.g. extracting by an expert system parts information necessary for maintenance activities/repairs based on collected/monitor asset information) is disclosed in at least in the following:

- Schick et al. (U.S. Patent Publication No. 2002/0065698): Paragraphs 0048-0049, 0052, 0057-0058; Figure 5, Element 135; Figure 6, Elements 143 and 145;
- Feral et al. (09/644420): Page 8, Lines 23-30; Page 9, Lines 1-3 and 29-32; Page 10, Lines 1-8; Page 13, Lines 9-13; Page 14, Lines 12-13; Page 15, Lines 12-15; Page 17, Lines 10-32; Figure 2, Element 60, 66; Figure 5, Element 134; Figure 6, Element 145; and
- Schlachach (60/201,243): Parts Module, Inventory Management Module, Page 5; Figure 1.

Regarding applicant's argument that the Yang et al. fails to be proper art due to a lack of support for the cited teachings examiner respectfully disagrees and has provided a copy of the parent application (Yang et al., Application No. 60/183,919). Support for the cited figures and/or paragraphs is disclosed in at least the following:

- i2 ServiceMatrix Presentation, Slides 6 and 13;
- ServiceMatrix Offerings, Pages 9-12;
- ServiceMatrix Footprint, Pages 5-9, 13, 15-16; and

- AutoPartsMatrix.com, Pages 14-15, 19-22 and 37-38.

6. It is noted that the applicant did not challenge the Official Notice(s) cited in the First Office Action therefore those statements as presented are herein after prior art. Specifically it has been established that it was old and well known in the art at the time of the invention:

- to use of intelligent agents (artificial intelligence, agent based systems) in e-Business, eCommerce and Supply Chain Management;
- that a network of intelligent software modules (agents) can together dynamically (collaboratively) manage the supply chain wherein each module (agent) is an: expert at its task, thereby optimizing its goals; coordinates its decisions with other modules, thereby optimizing supply chain wide goals; and can quickly responds to changes in cooperation with other modules;
- to have a logistics/transportation provider participate in a supply chain network wherein the logistics/transportation business provides a mechanism for the planning and management of materials (items, resources, etc.) flow/movement between/amongst the plurality of enterprises in the supply chain network;
- that one of the responsibilities/goals of a supply chain and other business systems related to the flow of materials is to ensure that items are moved within the supply chain as desired (e.g. on-time, right place, right time, etc.) and that if the items are not being moved within the supply chain according to plan/schedule (as desired) that the system/supply chain needs to take corrective action to prevent the

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system/supply chain interruptions due errant (missing, misrouted, incorrect, late, etc.) materials; and

- to utilize messaging (messages, queues, brokers, etc.) technologies, systems, design patterns and the like in intelligent agent systems in order to provide an efficient mechanism for managing the dynamic collaboration between agents.

Information Disclosure Statement

7. The information disclosure statement filed on May 29, 2001 has been made part of the record in the application. It should be noted that the submitted IDS constitutes *five* pages and lists over a thousand pages of reference material. The applicant is invited to specifically point out those references, and specifically the portions of those references, that may be pertinent to the claimed invention.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

8. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

9. Claims 1-15 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Roddy et al., U.S. Patent Publication No. 2003/0055666 in view of Yang et al., U.S. Patent Publication No. 2001/0034673.

Regarding Claim 1 Roddy et al. teach a method and system for managing enterprise assets as part of a supply chain network wherein the system and method evaluates, identifies, predicts and manages the maintenance (service, repair, operation, overhaul) of the plurality of assets "...to avoid unexpected equipment failures and to accomplish maintenance and repair activities in an efficient manner", (Paragraphs 0024-0025; Abstract).

More specifically Roddy et al. teach an asset maintenance management method and system in a supply chain network (network: collection of businesses/entities, interconnected systems/processes, communication network) comprising:

- a customer maintenance system (Paragraph 0007; Figure 4) into which information pertaining to a work order (repair order, repair action; Paragraph 0082; Figure 9) is entered including information that identifies the piece of equipment (asset ID; Figure 2, Element 30) to be repaired and one or more items (parts, materials,

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personnel, equipment, facilities, service center, etc.) expected to be used during a repair procedure (service; e.g. materials/resource availability, inventory management; Paragraphs 0082-0083, 0087);

- a customer system (agent server, application, module, software, "expert system", Paragraph 0086; Figures 1, 4, 9) in communication (Internet, global communication/information network; Paragraphs 0006, 0027; Figure 1) with the maintenance system which extracts (pulls, collects, real-time data collection, monitors, queries, etc., Paragraph 0007-0008; Figures 5, 6; Figure 7, Element 122) from the maintenance system (subsystem) information that identifies what repairs/maintenance are to be performed wherein the maintenance specifies the parts, equipment, and other resources necessary to perform the maintenance activity information (Paragraphs 0075, 0086; Figure 7, Element 134) to create an advanced (forecast, future, predicted, planned, projected, etc.) demand notice (signal, alert, message, etc.) order (work order, repair action, service recommendation, demand forecast, predicted repair/service/maintenance, purchase order; Paragraphs 0037; Figures 2, 3, 9) that identifies the items; and

- a distributor (maintenance repair centers, repair facilities) system in communication with a plurality of systems that respond to the advanced demand notice (message, signal) order (work/service order, work scope, service recommendation) to initiate the staging (placement, movement) of items expected to be used as part of the repair procedure ("The recommended action may be supplied directly into the train control system. At this time, the data center or service personnel may evaluate the

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most logical repair location in terms of various criteria, such as train proximity, parts, repair equipment availability, manpower availability, etc. The service recommendation automatically triggers the creation of an electronic work order 172 within a service shop management system. A notification is then sent, such as via an e-mail message or by providing information on an Internet web page, to the service team detailing the parts and labor necessary for a timely and accurate repair.”, Paragraph 0086; “As soon as the service team receives information about the necessary repair, team members gather or reserve parts, equipment and personnel needed to perform the corrective action.”, Paragraph 0087, “...inventory management, will be improved to have the correct part available when it is needed.”, Paragraph 0081; Paragraphs 0082-0088; Figures 3-4, 8, 9).

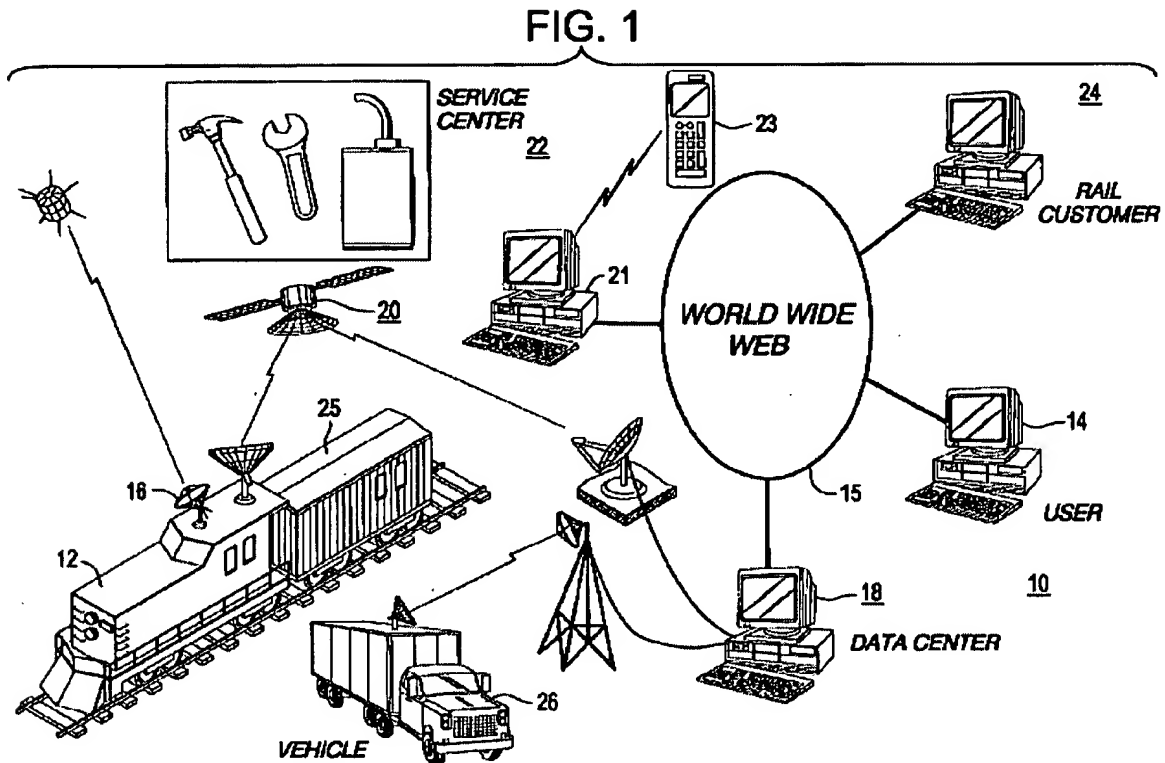


Figure 1: Roddy et al., Figure 1, Supply Chain/Enterprise Network

FIG. 2

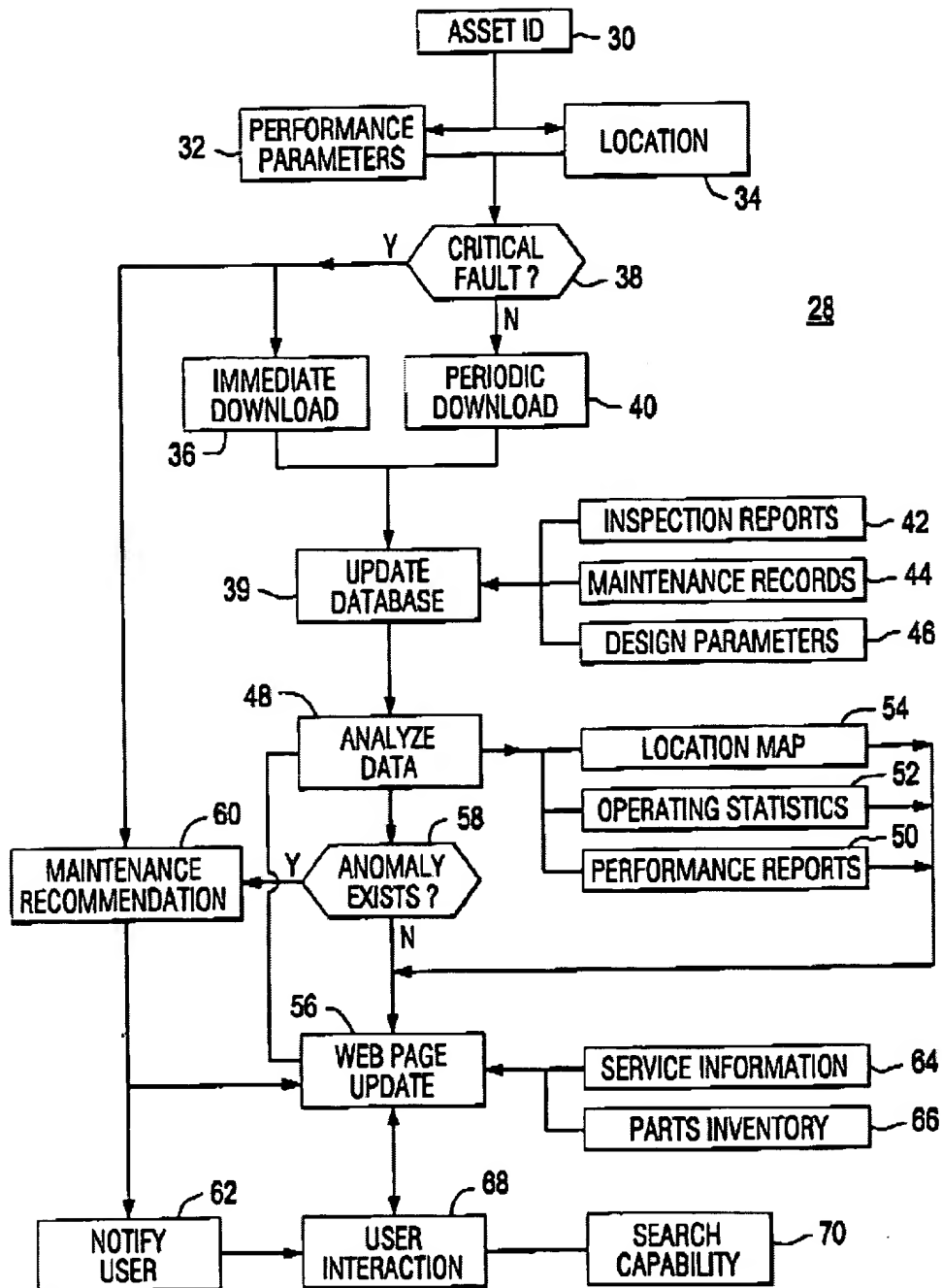


Figure 2: Roddy et al., Figure 2, Enterprise Asset Maintenance Management

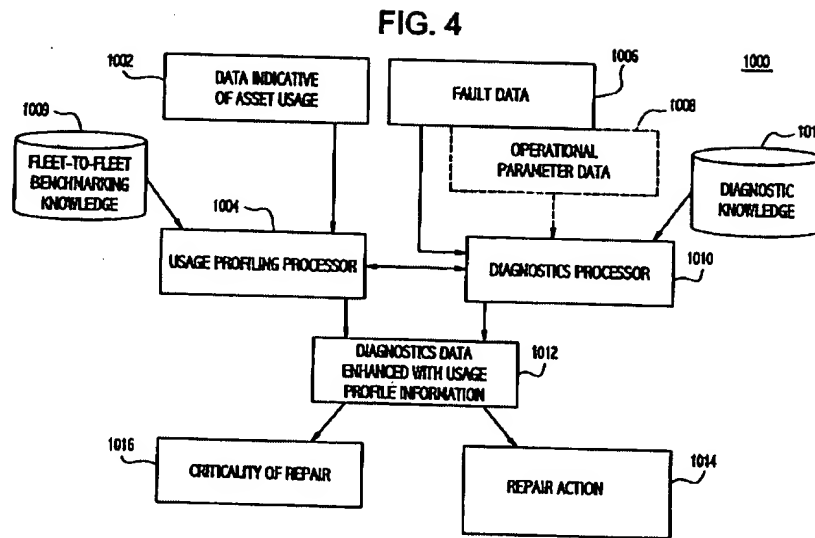


Figure 3: Figure 4, Asset Diagnostic System and Method

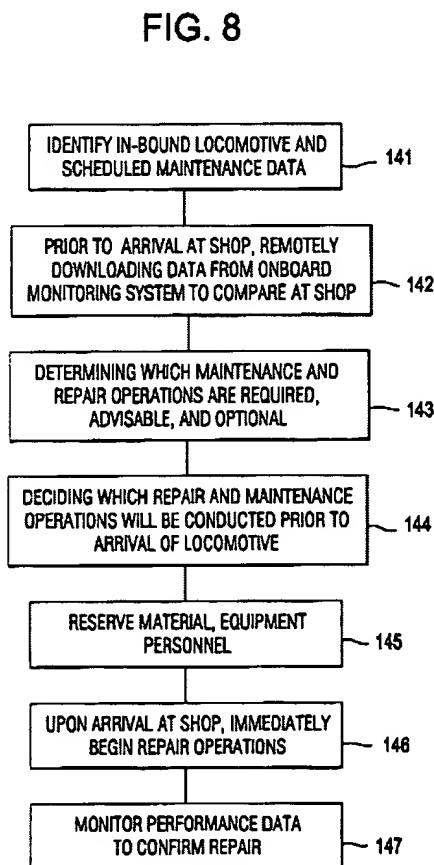


Figure 4: Roddy et al., Figure 8, Maintenance Information Extraction/Collection System and Method

FIG. 9

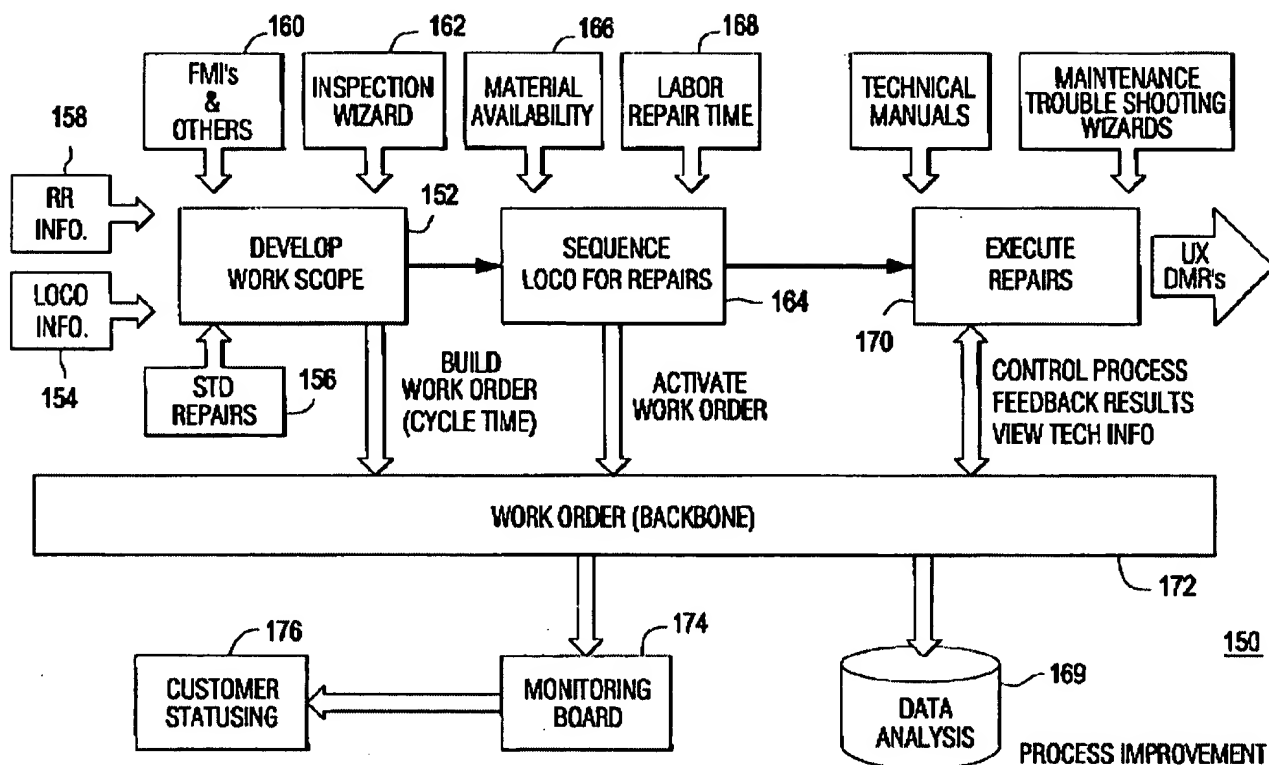


Figure 5: Roddy et al., Figure 9, Maintenance Work/Repair Order System and Method

While Roddy et al. teach that the asset maintenance management system and method utilizes expert systems (technologies, methods, techniques, sub-systems; Paragraph 0086) and well known e-Business technologies (Paragraph 0081) Roddy et al. does not expressly teach that the maintenance management system and method utilizes well known agent technologies, method, systems or techniques.

Official notice is taken that the use of intelligent agents (artificial intelligence, agent based systems) in e-Business, eCommerce, Supply Chain Management and the like is well established and well known. More specifically it is old and well known that a network of intelligent software modules (agents) can together dynamically (collaboratively) manage the supply chain wherein each module (agent) is an expert at its task, thereby optimizing its goals; coordinates its decisions with other modules, thereby optimizing supply chain wide goals; and can quickly responds to changes in cooperation with other modules.

It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time of the invention to modify the method and system for asset maintenance management, specifically leveraging the system's utilization of expert systems and e-Business technologies, as taught by Roddy et al., to utilize an intelligent agents to manage the system and method for predictive maintenance and service parts fulfillment in a supply chain network in a substantially automated manner.

Regarding Claim 2 Rodd et al. teach that the method and system for asset maintenance management in a supply chain network (a collection of cooperative businesses/processes, etc.) further comprises a supplier system (e.g. a supplier of locomotives; Paragraph 0003) that cooperates (works with, communicates with, connects to, collaborates with) the distributor system (maintenance service centers; Paragraph 0026; Figure 1).

While Roddy et al. teach the utilization of inventory management systems, parts/item inventories as well as the determining of parts availability and the like in response/relation to the advance (future, forecast, schedule) repair notices (orders, work order, repair orders) Roddy et al. is silent on which specific entity supplies, provides or replenishes the expected repair items into the supply chain.

Yang et al. teach a service parts inventory management and planning method, system and marketplace (portal), in the analogous art of service planning/asset maintenance, for providing service parts (items, materials, resources) from a plurality of suppliers (sellers, vendors) into a supply chain network (electronic marketplace, portal; Abstract) for the purpose of facilitating the planning, management, distribution and fulfillment of service parts in a supply chain network comprising a plurality of suppliers, distributors and customers (multi-echelon inventory systems; Paragraphs 0007-0008; Figures 1-2).

Further Yang et al. teach that "A primary goal in service planning is therefore maintaining adequate service parts inventory to satisfy customer demands as they occur. In multi-echelon inventory systems, the locations from which inventory is deployed may significantly impact the overall service level achieved.", (Paragraph 0005).

More generally Yang et al. teach that the service parts inventory management and planning method and system further comprises:

- a supply chain network including a plurality of collaborating planner systems (ERP/enterprise systems; Figure 3, Element 48; Paragraphs 0003, 0007, 0030, 0050);
- access by the plurality of planner systems to a plurality of service parts (items) information including but not limited to demand forecasts wherein demand forecasts for "...service parts based on data concerning the lifespan of products and their constituent parts, failure rates of products and their constituent parts, and any other suitable information.", (Paragraphs 0024, 0034);
- generating inventory, fulfillment and replenishment plans according to a plurality of information including but not limited to demand forecasts (Paragraphs 0018-0019);
- staging (locating, placing, stocking) service parts in accordance with the fulfillment/inventory plan (i.e. in response to future/forecasted demand, orders, etc.; "A manager application receives the inventory plan and, according to the inventory plan, initiates one or more services in an attempt to resolve at least a portion of the service parts excesses or needs at one or more of the stocking locations through interaction with one or more other entities.", Paragraph 0007);
- a procurement, order management and planning subsystem enabling customers, suppliers and distributors to collaborate (communicate) to obtain (purchase) service parts/items (Paragraphs 0020, 0038, 0042, 0046); and
- a service scheduling subsystem which coordinates parts requirements with service requests based on available service parts and ensures that parts are available at the repair site on or before the schedule service date (Paragraphs 0041-0043).

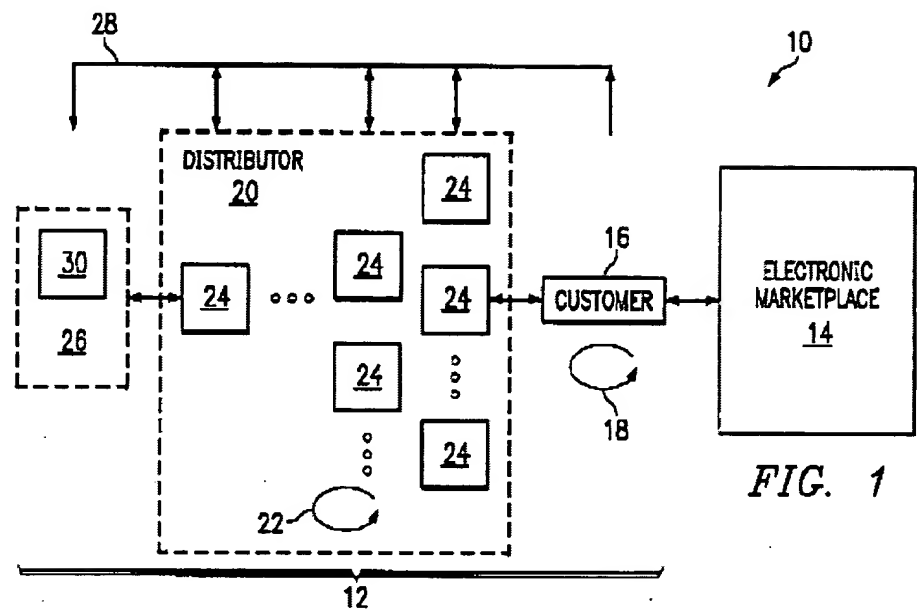


Figure 6: Yang et al., Figure 1

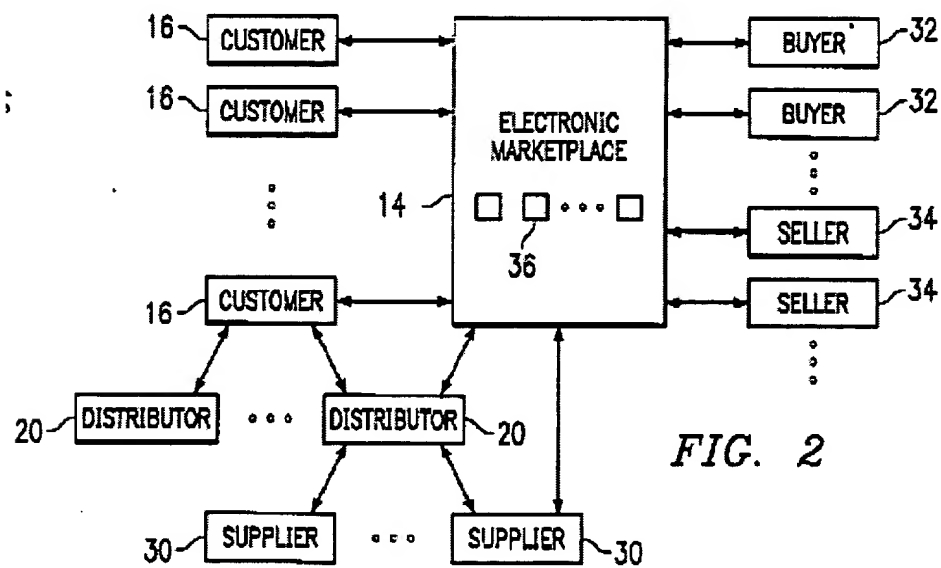


Figure 7: Yang et al., Figure 2, Supply Chain Network

It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time of the invention that the asset maintenance management system and method, specifically the system's focus on improving the efficiency (availability) of the managed assets through predictive and preventative maintenance, as taught by Roddy et al. would have benefited from leveraging the service parts inventory management and planning system, method and marketplace to improve service parts availability and predictability resulting in less downtime (equipment/materials unavailability, unexpected failures, etc.), lower costs and improved customer satisfaction in view of the teachings of Yang et al. (Yang et al.: Paragraph 0009).

Regarding Claim 3 Roddy et al. teach an asset maintenance management system and method wherein the customer maintenance system comprises a computerized maintenance management system (Paragraph 0027, 0029; Figure 1).

Regarding Claim 4 Roddy et al. teach that the customer maintenance system comprises an enterprise asset management system as discussed above.

Regarding Claim 5 Roddy et al. teach an asset maintenance management system wherein the customer system (agent server, "expert system" – Paragraph 0086, application, module, software; Figures 1, 4, 9) comprises several subsystems (intelligent agents, modules, components, code, etc.) that extract (pull, collect, real-time data collection, monitor, query, etc., Paragraphs 0007-0008; Figures 5, 6; Figure 7, Element

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122) information from the customer maintenance and other systems in response to a user entering or modifying a work order (Paragraphs 0029, 0035, 0078, 0084; Figures 2, 9).

Regarding Claim 6 Roddy et al. teach an asset maintenance management system wherein the distributor system(s) comprises a demand forecast (advance demand) subsystem (agent, module, component, application, etc.) that uses the forecast demand data (advance demand notice, message, alert, etc.) to determine (select, calculate) the resources, materials (parts, personnel, equipment) and location (service facility) to execute the maintenance/service work order (Paragraph 0081; Figure 9).

While Roddy et al. teach the utilization of inventory management systems as well as the staging of resources/items necessary for the repair of an enterprise asset Roddy et al. is silent on the details of the inventory management system or the development of a fulfillment (inventory) plan.

Yang et al. teach that the service parts inventory management and planning method and system, in the analogous art of service planning/asset maintenance, for the purposes of providing service parts into a supply chain creates/generates and utilizes inventory, fulfillment and replenishment plans (Paragraphs 0018-0019).

Yang et al. further teach that the service parts inventory management and planning system and method stages (stocks, locates) service parts (items) in the supply chain network in accordance with the fulfillment/inventory plan which is developed/generated in response to future/forecasted demand ("A manager application receives the inventory plan and, according to the inventory plan, initiates one or more services in an attempt to resolve at least a portion of the service parts excesses or needs at one or more of the stocking locations through interaction with one or more other entities.", Paragraph 0007; Paragraphs 0018-0019).

It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time of the invention that the asset maintenance management system and method, specifically the system's focus on improving the efficiency (availability) of the managed assets through predictive and preventative maintenance, as taught by Roddy et al. would have benefited from leveraging the service parts inventory management and planning system, method and marketplace, specifically the systems ability to develop and utilize fulfillment plans, to improve service parts availability and predictability resulting in less downtime (equipment/materials unavailability, unexpected failures, etc.), lower costs and improved customer satisfaction in view of the teachings of Yang et al. (Yang et al.: Paragraph 0009).

Regarding Claim 7 Roddy et al. teach an asset maintenance management system and method wherein the system comprises a subsystem (intelligent agent,

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software, module, component) that determines the probability that each item (part, component, resource) in the demand forecast (advanced demand notice, by the customer) will be needed during the repair procedure, for use in staging (locating, moving) the items within the supply chain ("...to generate a prediction of a failure in a mobile asset and at least one likely repair likely to prevent the failure in the mobile asset. A repair weight indicative of the probability that the repair will prevent the predicted failure is determined.", Paragraph 0008; "...make probabilistic determination of a relationship between a predicted failure, and a likely corrective action to prevent the occurrence of the failure.", Paragraph 0052; Paragraphs 0025, 0051-0054; Abstract).

Regarding Claim 8 Roddy et al. teach an asset maintenance management system and method further comprising a subsystem (intelligent agent, software module, component, code) that determines and stages all the necessary service repair resources as discussed above.

The utilization of one or more sources for an item and/or the utilization of one or more equivalent items (i.e. sourcing alternatives; e.g. asking a second supplier to provide a needed repair item if the first/primary supplier is unable to meet the order) in a supply chain is old and well known. However, Roddy et al. is silent on the specific implementation part/item sourcing (selection) process used by the system.

Yang et al. teach a service planning and management system, in an analogous art of asset maintenance management, wherein the system further comprises an order management and fulfillment subsystem that enables a plurality of suppliers to fulfill (broker, bid) an order/item (i.e. sourcing alternatives wherein each supplier represents an alternative source for the same or similar items listed on the work order).

It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time of the invention that the enterprise asset maintenance system and method, specifically the systems focus on improving the efficiency (availability) of the managed assets through predictive and preventative maintenance, as taught by Roddy et al. would have benefited from leveraging the service parts inventory management and planning system, method and marketplace, specifically the system's ability to order/source items/parts from any of a plurality of vendors in the parts marketplace, to improve service parts availability and predictability resulting in less downtime (equipment/materials unavailability, unexpected failures, etc.), lower costs and improved customer satisfaction in view of the teachings of Yang et al. (Yang et al.: Paragraph 0009).

Regarding Claim 9 Roddy et al. teach a method and system for asset maintenance management further comprising a transportation (logistics, shipping; e.g. train; Figure 1) system in communication (linked; Figure 1) with the distributor system (service centers).

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Roddy et al. does not expressly teach that a transportation (logistics, shipping, etc.) system coordinates with the distributor system to assist in moving the items within the supply chain.

Yang et al. teach that the service parts inventory management and planning method and system, in the analogous art of service planning/asset maintenance, for the purposes of providing service parts into a supply chain includes the collaboration (coordination) between a plurality of "enterprise systems" (planner systems) including but not limited to the collaboration between distributors, suppliers, customers and the like (Paragraphs 0008-0009, 0043).

Yang et al. does not expressly teach that a logistics/transportation provider is part of the service parts inventory management and planning method, system and marketplace.

Official notice is taken that the participation of a logistics/transportation provider in a supply chain network is old and very well known and provides a mechanism for the planning and management of materials (items, resources, etc.) flow/movement between/amongst the plurality of enterprises in the supply chain network.

It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time of the invention that the asset maintenance management system and method, specifically the system's

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focus on improving the efficiency (availability) of the managed assets through predictive and preventative maintenance, as taught by Roddy et al. would have benefited from leveraging the service parts inventory management and planning system, method and marketplace to improve service parts availability and predictability resulting in less downtime (equipment/materials unavailability, unexpected failures, etc.), lower costs and improved customer satisfaction in view of the teachings of Yang et al. (Yang et al.: Paragraph 0009).

Further it would have been obvious that the system and method for predictive maintenance & service parts fulfillment in a supply chain network in view of the combined teachings of Roddy et al. and Yang et al. would have included as one of the plurality of participating entities (enterprises) in the supply chain network a logistics/transportation provider, having their own "planning system" to be integrated into the supply chain, in order to facilitate, plan and manage the transportation (shipment, movement) of items amongst/between the plurality of enterprises in the supply chain network; the resultant system providing more robust scheduling and planning capabilities.

Regarding Claims 10 and 11 Roddy et al. teach an asset maintenance management system and method wherein the plurality of systems in the supply chain (i.e. transportation, supplier, distributor, customer, etc.) are communicate and monitor the movement of the repair items within the supply chain (Paragraphs 0007-0008, 0026-0029; Figure 1).

Regarding Claim 12 Roddy et al. teach an asset maintenance management system ensures that service items (parts, resources) are monitored to insure that the work order can be executed as planned as discussed above.

Roddy et al. does not expressly teach an enterprise asset maintenance management system and method wherein the system (intelligent agent, component, code, module) forms (creates, generates) a corrective (alternative, updated, revised) fulfillment plan if the subsystem determines that the items are not being moved with the supply chain to meet the expected use during the repair procedure (i.e. as desired).

Official notice is taken that it is old and well known that one of the responsibilities/goals of a supply chain and other business systems related to the flow of materials is to ensure that items are moved within the supply chain as desired (e.g. on-time, right place, right time, etc.) and that if the items are not being moved within the supply chain according to plan/schedule (as desired) that the system/supply chain needs to take corrective action to prevent the system/supply chain interruptions due errant (missing, misrouted, incorrect, late, etc.) materials.

It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time of the invention that the asset maintenance management system and method, with its ability to schedule, monitor and manage the plurality of service resources, needed to

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repair/maintain assets, based on a plurality of constraints (e.g. part/resource availability), would have benefited from employing a number of well known supply chain (work flow, enterprise planning) techniques including taking corrective action if the items in the supply chain are not being moved as desired; the resultant system ensuring that items are being moved within the supply chain according to the developed (desired) plan/schedule).

Regarding Claim 13 Roddy et al. teach a method and system for managing asset maintenance wherein the system comprises an equipment knowledge base (database) for determining the probability of need for each item for use in staging the items within the supply chain ("...to generate a prediction of a failure in a mobile asses and at least one likely repair likely to prevent the failure in the mobile asset. A repair weight indicative of the probability that the repair will prevent the predicted failure is determined.", Paragraph 0008; "...make probabilistic determination of a relationship between a predicted failure, and a likely corrective action to prevent the occurrence of the failure.", Paragraph 0052; Paragraphs 0025, 0051-0054; Abstract).

Regarding Claim 14 Roddy et al. teach an asset maintenance management system and method wherein the customer system (agent server, module) extracts (pulls, retrieves, collects, monitors) information from the customer maintenance system for populating the equipment knowledge base (database), the information being used in determining the probability of need of items specified in future work orders (advanced

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demand notice, demand forecast; Paragraphs 0007-0008, 0025, 0051-0054; Abstract; Figures 5-7).

Regarding Claim 15 Roddy et al. teach an asset maintenance management method and system in a supply chain network (network: collection of businesses/entities, interconnected systems/processes, communication network) comprising:

- a customer maintenance system (Paragraph 0007; Figure 4) into which information pertaining to a work order (repair order, repair action; Paragraph 0082; Figure 9) is entered including information that identifies the piece of equipment (asset ID; Figure 2, Element 30) to be repaired and one or more items (parts, materials, personnel, equipment, facilities, service center, etc.) expected to be used during a repair procedure (service; e.g. materials/resource availability, inventory management; Paragraphs 0082-0083, 0087);
- a customer system (agent server, application, module, software, "expert system", Paragraph 0086; Figures 1, 4, 9) in communication (Internet, global communication/information network; Paragraphs 0006, 0027; Figure 1) with the maintenance system which extracts (pulls, collects, real-time data collection, monitors, queries, etc., Paragraph 0007-0008; Figures 5, 6; Figure 7, Element 122) from the maintenance system (subsystem) information that identifies what repairs/maintenance are to be performed wherein the maintenance specifies the parts, equipment, and other resources necessary to perform the maintenance activity information (Paragraphs 0075,

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0086; Figure 7, Element 134) to create an advanced (forecast, future, predicted, planned, projected, etc.) demand notice (signal, alert, message, etc.) order (work order, repair action, service recommendation, demand forecast, predicted repair/service/maintenance, purchase order; Paragraphs 0037; Figures 2, 3, 9) that identifies the items; and

- a distributor (maintenance repair centers, repair facilities) system in communication with a plurality of systems that respond to the advanced demand notice (message, signal) order (work/service order, work scope, service recommendation) to initiate the staging (placement, movement) of items expected to be used as part of the repair procedure ("The recommended action may be supplied directly into the train control system. At this time, the data center or service personnel may evaluate the most logical repair location in terms of various criteria, such as train proximity, parts, repair equipment availability, manpower availability, etc. The service recommendation automatically triggers the creation of an electronic work order 172 within a service shop management system. A notification is then sent, such as via an e-mail message or by providing information on an Internet web page, to the service team detailing the parts and labor necessary for a timely and accurate repair.", Paragraph 0086; "As soon as the service team receives information about the necessary repair, team members gather or reserve parts, equipment and personnel needed to perform the corrective action.", Paragraph 0087, "...inventory management, will be improved to have the correct part available when it is needed.", Paragraph 0081; Paragraphs 0082-0088; Figures 3-4, 8, 9).

While Roddy et al. teach that the asset management system and method utilizes expert systems and well known e-Business technologies (Paragraphs 0081, 0086) Roddy et al. does not expressly teach the utilization well known agent technologies (techniques, architecture, design pattern, method, systems, etc.).

Yang et al. teach that the service parts inventory management and planning system, in an analogous art of service planning/asset maintenance, for the purposes of providing service parts into a supply chain utilizes a transaction broker for the purposes of facilitating the transactions (communications, messages) between the plurality of entities and systems in the supply chain network (Paragraph 0028).

Yang et al. does not expressly teach that the service parts method, system and marketplace utilize intelligent agents (artificial intelligence).

Official notice is taken that the use of intelligent agents (artificial intelligence, agent based systems) in e-Business, eCommerce, Supply Chain Management and the like is well established and well known. More specifically it is old and well known that a network of intelligent software modules (agents) can together dynamically (collaboratively) manage the supply chain wherein each module (agent) is an expert at its task, thereby optimizing its goals; coordinates its decisions with other modules,

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thereby optimizing supply chain wide goals; and can quickly responds to changes in cooperation with other modules.

It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time of the invention that the asset maintenance system and method as taught by Roddy et al. would have benefited from leveraging the service parts inventory management and planning system, method and marketplace to improve service parts availability and predictability resulting in less downtime (equipment/materials unavailability, unexpected failures, etc.), lower costs and improved customer satisfaction in view of the teachings of Yang et al. (Yang et al.: Paragraph 0009).

Further it would have been obvious to modify the system and method for predictive maintenance & service parts fulfillment in a supply chain network in view of the combined teachings of Roddy et al. and Yang et al. to utilize agent technologies, tools and techniques (artificial intelligence, expert systems, etc.) to facilitate the collaboration and implementation of the plurality of enterprises in the supply chain network; the resultant system being more capable of managing the predictive and preventative maintenance of enterprise assets in a substantially automated manner.

Conclusion

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the mailing date of this final action.

The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure.

- Morjaria et al., U.S. Patent No. 5,845,272, teach a system and method for determining the cause of equipment failures.
- Peterson et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,324,252, teach a system and method for managing a supply chain transaction distribution network for maintenance, repair and operating parts and supplies.
- Schlabach et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,810,406, teach a system and method maintaining equipment wherein the system comprises a plurality of subsystems (modules) including but not limited to maintenance scheduling and planning, maintenance/repair parts ordering and tracking.
- Rickey et al., EP 0467257A2, teach an equipment maintenance system and method comprising a plurality of subsystems (components, modules, etc.) including but

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not limited to maintenance schedule management and spare's inventory management.

Rickey et al. further teaches that the spare's inventory management subsystem "allows ordering of spare parts based on predicted maintenance" and point ordering.

- Eastman et al., WO 98/2402, teach a system and method for maintaining equipment (components) based on simulated/forecasted usage/failure data.

- Dilger, Karen, To Protect and Serve, teaches the commercial use of computerized equipment maintenance systems wherein such system typically comprise work orders for preventive/predictive maintenance, equipment monitoring/recording and tracking, inventory control, labor/resource scheduling and purchasing. Dilger further teaches the efforts of businesses to evolve these systems into Internet-based systems.

- MRO.com Delivers Buy-Side Online Procurement Solution, teaches the commercial availability and public use of a supply chain transaction network for maintenance, repair and operating parts and supplies comprising customers, distributors and manufacturers.

- Griffin, Kate, Grainger add Web to Arsenal, teaches Grainger's efforts in developing and deploying a transaction supply network starting in 1995. Griffin further teaches Grainger's partnering with PDSI and CommerOne to provide these Internet-based systems and methods.

- Avery, Susan, Electronic tools help distributors meet service demands, teaches the commercial availability and public use of a plurality of supply chain transaction network for maintenance, repair and operating supplies including but not limited to iProcure and SupplyForce.com.

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Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Scott L. Jarrett whose telephone number is (571) 272-7033. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Friday, 8:00AM - 5:00PM.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Hafiz Tariq can be reached on (571) 272-6729. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).


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9/14/2005


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